

Symposium: Contemporary Issues in American Methodism by Panel of Fourteen

John O. Gross*

In many ways the major topic of our generation is ecumenism. We may rejoice in the deepening of Christian fellowship as now noticed among all churches of Christendom in general and among Protestant churches in particular. However, nothing could be more disastrous than for the Protestant churches to merge into an amorphous mass and discard the values developed through their respective traditions. All the churches which enter into plans of union should bring such aspects of truth as have been stressed by them individually. If, for instance, The Methodist Church does not carry over into the total life of Christendom the unique flavor produced by the Methodist movement, it will fall short of contributing its best. Methodists should not forget that they do have a distinct ethos to which the Holy Spirit has committed many treasures. These treasures have been essential to our own faith and they must be held as a sacred trust for the universal church of Jesus Christ.

A careful student of Methodism will notice a sharp contrast between The Methodist Church in America and Great Britain. In many ways The Methodist Church in the United States can be considered the national church of the United States. It has not only influenced the cultural development of this country, but also its own life has been shaped by the environment in which it lives. And from this close connection with our nation rise some of the salient issues facing The Methodist Church of today.

The impact of a materialistic environment upon the work of the church. Without question, ideals of efficiency and the use of statistics as evidence of progress operate against our possessing a true understanding of the nature of the spiritual.

The lack of a working synthesis between education and evangelism. The former is influenced by current educational philosophy and the latter continues to be associated with pioneer Methodism.

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The emphasis upon social action as such without an adequate underlying theology. Here the theology of John Wesley still is relevant. His ministry of reform was inspired by his personal views of both God and man.

The search for motivation for missionary work. In the period of change beginning with the end of World War I the "why" of missions has lacked clarity.

The diminution of convictions on moral issues. No matter with what they deal—race, liquor, sex, etc., the unanimity once known—as for instance on liquor—no longer exists.

Georgia Harkness*

I am asked to list five important contemporary issues confronting American Methodism. Among the top five I would place the following: (1) our basic theology, made relevant to life, (2) race relations. The Central Jurisdiction must be abolished, but beyond that there is much to be done before genuine interracial fellowship is established, (3) constructive church-wide study and action for peace and world order, (4) decision as to whether our position on alcoholic beverages is to be total abstinence, as in the past, or moderation, as held by many fellow-Christians, and to what extent we shall place alcohol problems in a wider setting, (5) our relation to the ecumenical movement. Here the problem is not so much our cooperation at local, National Council and World Council levels, to which we are committed, as of organic mergers, whether of local congregations to form community churches, autonomous unions abroad, with the Evangelical United Brethren, or our response to the Consultation On Church Union proposals.

All are major issues, but the first is basic to all the others. It is theology in relation to life which undergirds, motivates, and gives direction to personal evangelism, Christian education, social action, and every legitimate function of the church. A meaningful interpretation of the Christian faith vitalizes worship and helps to prepare laymen to take a responsible place as the church within the world. Beginnings have been made, but more is needed. Ministers should be freed from many routine tasks to give more time to reading and thoughtful study. In the seminaries there is a place for acquaintance with the nuances of contemporary theological debate, but more

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attention needs to be given to the eternal truths of the Christian gospel and modes of communicating these to the people. There is no substitute for the central notes of evangelical Christian thought, with the union of open-minded inquiry and personal commitment, which is our Methodist heritage.

C. Philip Hinerman*

With reference to "Contemporary Issues in American Methodism," there are several areas of major concern in modern Methodism. The first of these, and perhaps the most important so far as I am concerned, is the problem of historicity in the Holy Scriptures, especially to the Bultmannian debate on history versus mythology. This is particularly relevant to the problem of the Resurrection and the Ascension. Bishop Robinson, in a recent sermon printed in the *Christian Century Pulpit*, goes to great pains to make sure that we look upon the Ascension not as an event in history. It is not something that *happened* on that day. But he goes on to preach what the Ascension does mean, using all the biblical and evangelical concepts of "Christ's Lordship Over History," and "Christ's Triumph Over the World."

This illustrates the dilemma of modern liberalism. How shall she express the evangelical gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ while at the same time denying in essence the historic happenings or events? Now all of this relates precisely to modern American Methodism. However far from the actual daily battle in the parish life these great conflicts might be, yet they do relate to the journeyman pastor. He has probably been educated in liberal denominational colleges and theological seminaries. He has been "sold" precisely on the "demythology" concepts. How then shall he relate to his own parish and the people of that parish, who may very well have some faith in the historicity of these far-off events?

Admittedly there are other problems connected with modern Methodism. One of these is the increased power of the episcopal office and of the hierarchy in general. This usually refers to the cabinet of the conference and its insistence that men conform to the current Methodist image.

Another tremendous American Methodist problem is the paucity of evangelical teaching in American liberal theological seminaries.

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A professor, for example, in a Methodist seminary in our southland says Jesus Christ is not essential to modern Christianity.

But all of these related problems are directly related to the problem that I pose today as the chief issue: namely, the historicity of Jesus Christ. Kahler reminds us that to seek an historic Jesus is a will-o'-the-wisp search. But Kahler also reminds us that it is the biblical Christ to which we must cling, and we must build our faith on this Rock. I would suggest that this Christological crisis is not only the supreme crisis of the Methodist Church today, but of all American Protestantism.

Carl Michalson in *The Hinge of History* says: "Do not ask if Jesus Christ rose again from the dead." He says, "To ask this is to ask a vulgar question." I would respond that to ask this is to ask the supreme question of this hour. He is either my Risen Lord, or His bones lie buried in middle eastern sands. It is either one or the other. We cannot have it both ways, as some modern esoteric theologians seem to desire. And which of these two we choose will make all the difference in the kind of faith that we possess.

Tracey K. Jones, Jr.*

The contemporary issue in American Methodism is its need to share in the renewal and reformation going on in the world-wide Christian community. The integrity of our renewal will be tested, in my judgment, by our capacity for self-criticism and experimentation. This will be seen in five areas of change.

Theological renewal. Methodists will need to be renewed in the dimension of depth and length of the Christian faith. There is no renewal that does not flow out of an experience of trust and faith in Jesus Christ, attested to by both the existential commitment of the individual and the worshipping community.

Liturgical renewal. Africans must indigenize the Gospel to African culture, so must we indigenize the Gospel to the technological culture around us. This can come only through worship in small disciplined groups and through personal discipline.

Social renewal. Christians realize that faith leads to responsible action in dealing with the threat of nuclear war and the struggle of the oppressed for their rights. Where Christian lives are not involved it is a question whether or not there is genuine renewal of faith in the life of the Cross.

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Ecumenical renewal. This calls Methodists out of the security of their traditional ecclesiastical structures to a more intensive search for the meaning of the unity that God wills for his people.

Renewal of the laity will test the openness of the clergy to encourage laymen to assume the leadership of the Christian mission to those in the universities, the government, and in the "suburbia" and "apartment" cities where we live.

The spirit of renewal seems to say: "Open up the windows of theology, ethics, liturgy, ecumenics, and the laity and let the fresh air of the Holy Spirit into the Church"!

Gerald Kennedy*

I have been asked to set down the five major issues in contemporary Methodism, and the following is my list, (1) evangelism, (2) theology, (3) preaching, (4) relevance to society, and (5) the race issue.

There is a sense in which the first one is the major issue because it includes all the rest. Evangelism is proclaiming the good news in such a way that it is listened to and believed. It is a word which is directed to the individual and his personal needs. It is also a social word to society that prophetically defines our sins, our dangers and our hopes. That is the reason I put it first.

In the second place is belief, because the sickness of our church is that many of our people have no great convictions about God, about Christ, and about salvation.

In the third place, I listed preaching to the common people because I find among our intelligentsia a loss of confidence in this "foolishness of preaching." I do not believe any church is healthy that does not have confidence in the preached word as being the main task of the ministry.

Relevance is always a problem and we are now facing a situation where vast numbers of people simply ignore the church because they do not think it deals with things that matter.

The last issue is race because civil rights is an idea whose time has come.

Where shall we find an answer to our problems? It must come, I think, not through more organization but through men who will direct us to a complete surrender to God's will and complete confidence in the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

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Kermit Long*

There are tremendous issues which must be grappled with today. They must be solved God's way; for life will work only one way—God's way. These issues have a theological basis and are grounded on the truth of God. The church and its people must be concerned with them. Solving them aright will go far toward eliminating the festering sores of society which many people falsely mistake to be the real issues. Racial strife, war, strong drink, immorality, poverty, and all such consequences of maladjusted people in a sick society will dissolve in the white light of God's presence and in a world inhabited by God-loving, Spirit-filled, Christ-possessed people.

The five issues which I would name are both eternal and contemporary. Each is an opportunity as well as a challenge to us all.

The reality of God. Is God real, or is He not? Can I as a person know Him? Those who say they believe in God must have a God who loves them, and lives and moves and has His being in them every day, all the time.

The centrality of Christ. Those who call themselves Christians must be new creations, new creatures in Christ, completely devoted to Him. It is not enough that church members be "baptized pagans," merely conforming to the more or less respectable or accepted level of a low-grade society. What greater issue is there than whether or not Christians will really be Christian?

The authority of the Bible. The Word of God is always relevant. The Book that shows us God in all of His self-revealing will and love must be made prominent and permanent in the life of a person today. How else can we know and have the mind of Christ? How else can we possess His Spirit and let His Spirit possess us?

The responsibility of witnessing. Each church member must be a Christian, and every Christian must witness for the Master. God and His Christ expect this of us. In fact, our witnessing is the only way that this world can become Christ's world. When we as Christians witness, we simply go out and share with others what God means to us. This is evangelism at its best. This is the greatest single way to bring people to God, to win them to Christ and His church, and to bring about a good world.

The role of the church. What is the church for? Just to gather Christians together once or twice a week? Being "gathered together" on Sunday morning is not enough. The church must not be ingrown; it must move out into the world. Through each member it must go

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into every corner of life and penetrate with the saving power of Christian influence. It must have a concern for every person, for every human problem. Each of its members must earnestly, honestly, lovingly care. Then we will be on the high road to capture this planet for the Master.

Robert G. Mayfield*

It appears to me that the five major contemporary issues facing Methodism are: (1) materialism, (2) race relations, (3) relevancy, (4) institutionalism, and (5) personal commitment. These are not listed in order of importance.

Concerning materialism, it has become increasingly apparent in recent years that the church evaluates the effectiveness of its clergymen and local churches on the basis of salary and budget.

In race relations, you cannot realize the meaning and dimension of this problem until you have traveled in Africa and Asia and understand what this question means to two-thirds of the world's people. Our actions speak far louder than our words.

On relevancy of message, we are hearing too many devotional messages that soothe and salve rather than biblical preaching that challenges men to courageous witnessing.

On institutionalism, too many of our annual conferences spend the major portion of their time on institutional or housekeeping matters and leave practically no time for strengthening their redemptive ministry to the world.

The major issue facing American Methodism is that of the personal commitment of its members. The vast majority of our people equate discipleship with membership. We accept people into membership almost as we accept members into community organizations. By personal commitment I mean the same thing that some of my friends describe as being "born again." This complete surrender and acceptance of Christ as one's personal Saviour, making Him Lord of your life, causes a person to "put off the old man" and "put on the new man." This is not a one-time event but must be a reaffirming commitment to Christ every day. If it is a one-time proposition, the radiance will gradually wear off and fade. If it is a reaffirming experience every day, one grows in grace until he becomes saturated with the love of Christ. His discipleship becomes a dynamic witness to the world.

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S. E. McCreless*

In our confused world, Methodism faces many problems, both within her own life and in the society she serves. Among these are such issues as (1) race relations, (2) the ecumenical movement, (3) theological and liturgical understanding, (4) the ministry, and (5) stewardship.

Among these we find present confusion in regard to the nature and function of the ministry resulting in a shrinking number of preachers. This deficiency is evidenced by increasing use of supply pastors, with fully one-third of our charges so filled. Lack of ministerial candidates and steady decrease in enrollment in theological schools bodes no improvement.

Methodism has always believed in a "called ministry." This leaves the church dependent upon the Holy Spirit to raise up messengers. But the Spirit works in and through God's people, and only a laity devoted to God's work will provide an adequate supply of ministers to meet the needs of the church.

Problems of ministerial recruitment do not depend on devices but upon renewal within the church. Such rebirth will prompt Methodist sons and daughters to forsake the lure of a secular society to answer the hard demands of Christ and His gospel. Upon parents rests responsibility for a Christian home from which God can call ministers.

Again, called ministers must be rightly trained and used. Methodist theological education needs great revision to bring us back to Methodist standards. The evangelical gospel of Wesley rightly understood and proclaimed is as potent as it was two hundred years ago. Methodism has a right to expect her theological schools to furnish a ministry competent to meet the needs of the space age. Our message is the same; only interpretation and method change. Honest evaluation compels judgment that Methodism spends more in support of theological education than she receives in return. Our schools must be made instruments of God and His church to prepare a ministry able to do God's work today.

Attention must also be given to the right use of called and trained ministers. Too many preachers are drained away from the proclamation of the gospel to the organization and promotion of programs. While such programs are necessary, a vital church should discover consecrated laymen to fill administrative posts, freeing her ordained ministry for the service of the Word and Sacrament. God

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will give us ministers only when we are ready as a people to hear His call and to answer it through the proper preparation and effective use of His messengers.

Carl Michalson*

Ecumenism. Whether the American Methodist church should continue its promotion of world Methodism or set its member churches in other lands free for union with their own national churches. If the latter, whether within such unions former Methodists should keep their Methodism alive or express the reality of the newer unity in Christ's body.

Nature of the Congregation. Shall statistics outweigh discipline? Shall discipline be defined pietistically? Shall the sign of the church's presence be some form other than architectural?

Normativity of Popular Piety. The extent to which in the contest within the church between popular piety and authentic faith popular piety is rewriting faith and practice out of religious desires, exegeting the Scriptures in the light of these desires, and mobilizing the power of the laity in support of this invented theology.

Inclusive Fellowship. May not the question of *de facto* integration be as crucial to the church today as communion of Jews and Gentiles was in early Christendom?

Major issue. Work of the Holy Spirit: Old liberals and old conservatives alike have used the doctrine of the Holy Spirit mythologically. The former employ allusions to the work of the Spirit to endorse incremental rational ideas as acts of divine creativity. The latter use the doctrine as warrant for spiritual manifestations and forms of human activity which have no certifiable relationship to God's self-announced work in Jesus of Nazareth, or as justification for wistfulness toward the future as the place where God will perform wonders not yet disclosed. A demythologized doctrine of the Holy Spirit would settle for the modest claims to the work of God as already realized in Christ and would adopt a *filioque* base for testing all spiritual claims to see if they be of God.

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Joseph D. Quillian, Jr.*

There are other issues, of course, but the five that strike me as most obvious are: (1) the primacy of Christian commitment, (2) integration, (3) church union, (4) role of the laity, and (5) an adequate professional ministry.

Most of the problems of the church are neither simple nor altogether new. Any one issue is inseparable from several others, and those that are vibrantly contemporary relate to those that are perennial. For instance, integration in the church involves continuing concerns of polity such as the conditions for membership and the authority of the pastor to admit to membership those that he adjudges to be qualified, as well as our quality of Christian commitment in meeting this particular issue.

The issue that always is related to every other one is the primacy of Christian commitment. It is not that we first have complete Christian commitment and then face our problems. Rather, our commitment is shaped by the way that we respond to the issues of our time. To be sure, single devotion to our Lord does not provide us with simple and clear lines of action to be followed in complex situations. However, it is evident enough when Christian commitment is the primary motivating force and the measure of all attitudes and action and when "religion" is considered as an aid to achieving personal happiness, to maintaining the social status quo, or to furthering some cause other than the Christian faith itself. As a seminary dean, I am aware that recruitment for the ministry is influenced most of all by the quality of Christian commitment of parents and pastors. An adequate ministry and an effective laity depend chiefly upon the primacy of our common loyalty to our Lord.

G. Ernest Thomas **

I have listed the following as the five major issues in contemporary Methodism: (1) how to keep evangelical fervor in a society dominated by a suburban mind, (2) how to keep the church vital in an inner city situation, (3) how to demonstrate a concern for the

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ecumenical movement without surrendering basic New Testament attitudes and beliefs, (4) how to make The Methodist Church a fellowship of believing, praying, and serving Christians, and (5) how to relate the faith we profess to the moral, racial, social, and international problems of our society.

How to make The Methodist Church a fellowship of believing, praying, and serving Christians. The major problem of our day is the problem of casual loyalty to Christ and His church. That casual loyalty allows social habits and attitudes which are totally foreign to vital Christianity. The experience of the past decade shows that a vital experience of the power of Christ, followed by regular practice of church worship, prayer, Bible reading, tithing, and witnessing, will give fortitude of spirit to resist evil.

Claude H. Thompson*

As I see it, the following are both crises and opportunities for Methodism in our time: (1) the lay ministry, (2) renewal through prayer fellowship, (3) the ecumenical witness, (4) a new concern for evangelism, and (5) theological rebirth.

The lay ministry. The church seen as "the people of God," *ton laon tou theou*, is quite Methodistic. As in the Book of Acts, God's Spirit seems to have turned with special power toward the laity. The current strength of the lay witness is the church in dynamic action. The minister thus becomes the servant of the people of God.

Renewal through prayer fellowship. The emphasis upon small renewal groups in prayer, study, and witness, is one vital mode of church renewal. This is rooted deep in our heritage. It is, perhaps, one of the most encouraging signs of the times for new life in the church—and in the world.

The ecumenical witness. The world is too small for a parochial outlook of any one church. Methodism is well equipped to participate in all such endeavors—Protestant, Roman, Eastern. And our commitment to such witness in the National and World Councils of Churches is firmly established.

A new concern for evangelism. Methodism has two birthplaces—the prayer group and the university. Both the mind and the heart must be converted to Christ. Traditional methods likely will have to be modified, even replaced. But the appeal and action must be where

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the people are. But the first concern must be the message. Nothing less than the proclamation of a crucified and risen Lord is adequate for the sorrow, suffering, and sin of the world. There must be the offer of clear forgiveness, new life, and the search for sanctity.

But evangelism must also penetrate into the social sins of our time. Such evils as war, racial prejudice, delinquency, poverty and unemployment, alcoholism, civil rights, etc., must be faced with the converting power of Christ. One example: churches with doors closed to people of any race reveal a betrayal of the brotherhood Christ practiced. Thus exclusiveness must be removed from our culture—along with every other evidence of social disease.

Theological rebirth. Methodism is threatened from two theological directions: One is reactionary fundamentalism, often allied with social and political conservatism and the "radical right" agitators. This is not our heritage and it must be rejected even though these groups invoke the name of God and plead for patriotism.

The other is New Reformation theology. The accent is upon human sinfulness. Prayer is minimized, often rejected. Divine grace is so stressed that justification is substantially God's act alone. Christian experience is suspect, and any concern for an "assurance" of salvation is regarded as outmoded pietism. There is little joy in this melancholy mood of despair. And any concern for Christian morality is considered legalism.

These issues are serious—and provide a glorious opportunity for a resurgence of spiritual and theological vitality so urgently needed in our time. Will renewal come? God is faithful. Our task is a new dimension of total commitment.

A. Dudley Ward*

The five issues which seem to this writer to be most crucial are: (1) the spiritual renewal of leadership, both clergy and lay, (2) the creative utilization of the structure of Methodism, (3) an expanded social witness, (4) the ecumenical contribution of Methodism, and (5) the mission of Methodism in a technological, urban society.

Spiritual renewal of leadership of clergy and lay. Methodism is in a period of change. It is between the growth and vitality of the past and the tremendous opportunities which are ahead. By origin, Methodism is a sect that came into being as a movement of reformation in the church and society. Methodism is essentially at the

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same point today. The evidence that spiritual renewal is sought is abundant. But the pace at which renewal becomes a reality depends largely on the willingness of leadership to risk a direct encounter with Jesus Christ in spiritual disciplines and in an emphasis on Methodism's evangelical heritage. The latter means giving full expression to the central genius of Methodism, namely the nexus of inner spiritual vitality through the power of the Holy Spirit and the witness to this vitality in the world both to individuals and to the complex structures of modern society. Leadership, whether clergy or lay, is no longer a telling force for God unless it speaks and acts out of recognizable convictions.

The structure of the church. Methodism has a large, intricate structure which attempts to bring both freedom and order together with some success. However, in the face of radically changing social structures and in an increasingly complex society, Methodism needs to re-examine the structure itself but much more to effect utilization of the structure. For example, it is no longer tenable for the Methodist General Conference, held in America, to claim to be an international body when ninety per cent of the delegates originate in America and ten per cent from overseas. The proposal recently announced by Bishop Richard C. Raines for an international General Conference of Methodism raises the fundamental question.

Encouragement should be given to the lay and clergy in developing expressions of creative witness within the church and society. The great national programs which emanate from the General Conference ought to be in moratorium for two or three quadrennia. On every level a sense of freedom, initiative and response to the direction of the Holy Spirit, should be expressed.

Social witness. Methodism stands unique among all churches in this respect institutionally and in policy convictions. Only ten denominations in the ecumenical movement in the United States have paid social action staff, and further, only three have paid staff in international affairs. Methodism is the largest denomination of the ecumenical movement in America. It becomes increasingly important that Methodism give power, flexibility, and movement to social witness in race, international affairs (it has been numbered with the great peace churches of the world), personal moral decisions on such issues as alcohol, tobacco, gambling, drugs, and an adequate provision for the social rehabilitation of people in poverty. Methodism has a great opportunity to give substance and movement to the growing understanding and broadening conception of what social responsibility in society really means.

Ecumenical contributions. Methodism has been ecumenical in its genesis and has continued to increase its participation. Ecumenical and interfaith encounters and participation are now taken for granted. Methodism's greatest contribution is the genius of Methodism itself in a dynamic, evangelical witness and appeal, combined with

a thorough-going involvement in historical events. Methodism cannot be narrowly nationalistic—which it has a tendency to be—either in some of its sacred convictions or in terms of its structure. This will mean often in ecumenical involvement a willingness to make whatever accommodations are legitimate and necessary, thereby enhancing effective Christian witness.

The mission to the technological urban society. The world is now metropolitan. Methodism has often felt more at home in rural and small urban areas. It, however, still has a majority of its churches in urban centers and therefore has a tremendous responsibility to become radically functional in the great urban cities. It will mean new structures in the congregation, new kinds of cooperative witness both within Methodism and by Methodism to those outside its organization. It will mean involvement in a mission to the power centers, economic, social and political, which really determine the character of life within the city. Religious values will in the long run make the technological urban society good for people.

Methodism in its heritage, theology, structural and functional life, is in a most unique position to effectively deal with each one of these issues.

Lance Webb*

Church renewal. Will American Methodists discover anew "the unsearchable riches of Christ" resulting in the experience of "the new creation in Christ Jesus" within individuals, homes, the church, the nation and the world? This is the one issue upon which all the others depend.

An adequate ministry, both ordained and lay. Can we provide a sufficient number of effective ordained ministers with the precious combination of "knowledge with vital piety" as Mr. Wesley put it, whose zeal is identified with an intelligent application of the truths of the Gospel to the deepest needs of persons and society in this atomic space age? This would mean a renewal of preaching and pastoral concern.

How shall we who are ordained ministers teach and guide the "laity"—the people of God—to be much more than mere helpers of the ordained ministry in doing "church work" for the organized institution but also to serve as ministers of Christ wherever they live and work in the secular world?

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Shall Methodists in America be part of a world church or only a national church? Shall Methodists in the lands outside the United States be separated from us as autonomous national churches? Or shall the church in the United States and in other lands be united in a World Methodist Church with conferences to deal with local problems as well as a general conference that unites our mutual concern?

The ecumenical problem. How shall we as Methodists be truly ecumenical, accepting our place in the whole body of Christ, the church, and at the same time make our distinctive contribution? What specifically shall we do as talks progress with the Evangelical United Brethren and other major Protestant denominations? Shall we seek and find a union that promotes spiritual renewal without becoming unwieldy and top-heavy in organization and with diversity of worship and government? Or shall we "go on our own" except where co-operation is desirable?

The racial question. Shall we truly become an inclusive church where there is neither slave nor free, white nor black, but Christ is all and in all? Shall we approach the responsibility of our mission in the inner city, in the rural areas, and in other lands as "one people" with equal concern for people of all races and nationalities?

The renewal of the church is the one issue that will determine the others. While we cannot "bring renewal"—only the Holy Spirit can pour into our weak and ineffective lives the insight, courage and love required to fulfill our mission in these times—nevertheless it is our responsibility to fulfill the conditions so that the winds of the Spirit may blow on us.

We have tried intensified organization: building program onto program, creating wheels within wheels. Will we now discover for our times the "manifold wisdom of God" so that "we may have the power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ"?

Without this experience of the love of Christ who is the King of kings and Lord of lords in all this vast universe, we will never overcome the chill of doubt to live by faith that is intelligibly understood and expressed in our scientific age. Nor will we find adequate zeal and means to share these riches with all men. Instead we will be assimilated by the world and its culture rather than transforming that culture. "Some people do not believe in Missions," as one distinguished missionary has said. "How could they? They do not believe in Christ." This is the starting point. God in Christ must become real to us.

How? Through a renewal of worship, both corporate and personal, in which the Word made flesh is preached, listened to and shared in small groups as well as in the larger congregation. The renewal of great Christ-centered preaching is a necessity. The return of the

spiritual disciplines in our ministers and laymen, including personal and group depth Bible study, the practice of an intelligent life of prayer and reading until we are possessed by "an inner conviction of being overwhelmed by the Love of God"—only then can the Holy Spirit give to us the motivation and the wisdom we need for our times.

Renewal comes both as a quest and as a gift. The larger view that includes all races and peoples and makes possible a Methodism that is truly inclusive, ecumenical and dedicated to the Mission of Christ in our broken and divided world is the one requirement for a new day of spiritual growth and power in the church.